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NF01-484 Biosecurity: Protecting Your Health and the Health of Your Animals

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Biosecurity: Protecting Your Health and the Health of Your Animals

By Rosie Nold, Extension Youth Animal Science Specialist, and David R. Smith, Extension Dairy/Beef Veterinarian

What is the Concern?

The recent media attention on outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom, pseudorabies in Nebraska and other livestock-related diseases reminds us of the costly consequences of livestock diseases. Most diseases, including foot-and-mouth disease and pseudorabies, cannot be transmitted from animals to humans. Even though these diseases do not present any direct risks to humans, human contact and attendance at fairs can help spread these diseases to other livestock herds. Livestock disease outbreaks can be economically devastating to your family, your community and the state, which derives a large portion of its income from the livestock industry. Some diseases, such as club lamb fungus, salmonellosis, and *E. coli* O157:H7 may have significant health effects on humans.

Because fairs and shows are such an enjoyable activity for many people, it is important to keep these events open and accessible to both exhibitors and the public. However, it is equally important that exhibitors have an understanding of what measures need to be taken to prevent the spread of disease, and how everyone plays an important role in preventing the spread of disease among animals, and in some cases, to people. Some simple precautions to take before, during and after fairs are listed below.

For Preventing Spread of Diseases among Animals:

- Do not exhibit animals that have clinical signs of any contagious disease.
- Have your animals checked by a veterinarian and a health certificate issued (many shows require this) before the fair. This lessens the risk of spreading a disease to another exhibitor's animals.
- Do not share equipment among exhibitors, unless it is disinfected between uses. Ringworm and club lamb fungus are rapidly spread through contaminated clippers. Other diseases can be spread through shared use of feeding and watering equipment.
- When handling animals that are actively infected with ringworm or club lamb fungus, wear rubber gloves and wash with a detergent soap after handling.
- Change or wash clothing and shoes worn at the fair, before returning to work with other animals at

home.

- Isolate animals that you take home for a minimum of 14 days before reintroducing them to your flock or herd. This will allow for any signs of disease to appear, before the animal has a chance to infect other animals.
- Many shows for market animals have the option of selling the animal for harvest at the conclusion of the show. Seriously consider this option when disease transmission is a concern.
- Support the requirement and enforcement of animal health regulations.

For Preventing the Spread of Diseases to People:

- Discourage visitors from touching or petting animals.
- If visitors do touch animals, encourage them to wash their hands afterward.
- Wash your hands after direct contact with animals, particularly before eating.
- Avoid eating in animal exhibit areas.

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